

CODE OF MISCONDUCT



Sexual assault reports increase at U.S. military academies

A Cadet listens during a commencement ceremony for the Class of 2020 on the parade field, at the United States Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., June 13, 2020.

Associated Press

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Sexual assault reports increase at U.S. military academies

From Front

By LOLITA C. BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reported sexual assaults at the U.S. military academies increased sharply during the 2020-21 school year, as students returned to in-person classes during the coronavirus pandemic.

The increase continues what officials believe is an upward trend at the academies, despite an influx of new sexual assault prevention and treatment programs.

Comparing the totals over the past three years, however, is tricky. The number of reports dropped at all the academies during the pandemic-shortened 2019-20 school year, when in-person classes were canceled and students were sent home in the spring to finish the semester online. Although there were fewer reports that year than the previous year, one senior defense official said that based on trends the total likely would have shown an increase if students had

not left early. In addition, the number of reported assaults in 2020-21 was also higher than the pre-pandemic school year of 2018-19.

According to the Pentagon report released Thursday, the overall jump in cases was driven by increases at the Air Force Academy and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. There were 131 assaults reported by cadets or midshipmen in 2020-21, compared with 88 the previous year and 122 a year earlier.

Of the 131, cadets at the Air Force Academy in Colorado reported 52 assaults, compared with 46 at West Point in New York and 33 at the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland.

During a visit to West Point earlier this month, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth met with academy leaders, staff members and cadets and talked about the sexual assault problem. She said they talked about the so-called Trust Program, which is led by cadets and helps train them to address sexual assault and harass-



United States Military Academy graduating cadets march to their graduation ceremony of the U.S. Military Academy class 2021 at Michie Stadium on May 22, 2021, in West Point, N.Y.

Associated Press

ment and encourage intervention when they see questionable behavior.

"West Point is working hard to increase cadets' trust in their reporting system while at the same time preventing events from happening in the first place," Wormuth said, adding that West Point has increased resources for victims "to ensure the academy handles each case with care."

Victims at the academies are encouraged to report

assaults, and at times students will come forward to talk about unwanted sexual contact that happened in the years before they started school there. If those episodes of unwanted sexual contact are included, as well as those involving students but reported by individuals outside the schools, the total sexual assault reports for 2020-21 is 161. That also is an increase over the pre-pandemic year, when there were 148.

The latest increase comes as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and other leaders struggle to curb sexual assaults across the military, amid escalating criticism from Capitol Hill.

Lawmakers are demanding better prevention efforts and more aggressive prosecutions.

Austin and others have acknowledged that while they continue to study what works and what doesn't, they haven't yet found the answers.

Nate Galbreath, acting director of the Pentagon's sexual assault prevention office, said the department is encouraged that students are more willing to come forward and report assaults, allowing victims to get help and perpetrators to be held accountable. But the leaders across the military said they are also very concerned that the trends are going in the wrong direction, and Galbreath said that while there is an unprecedented attention on the problem right now, there is "still much more work to be done." □



Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga., takes a question from a reporter during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington, Sept. 28, 2021.

Associated Press

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and
MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The

U.S. Senate is launching a bipartisan working group of lawmakers to scrutinize conditions within the Bu-

Senate launches group to examine embattled U.S. prison system

reau of Prisons following reporting by The Associated Press that uncovered widespread corruption and abuse in federal prisons.

The working group, being led by Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Ga., and Sen. Mike Braun, R-Ind., is aimed at developing policies and proposals to strengthen oversight of the beleaguered federal prison system and improve communication between the Bureau of Prisons and Congress.

The group plans to examine the conditions of incarceration inside America's 122 federal prisons, protect human rights and promote transparency. The chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., also will be part of the group.

The federal prison system, a hotbed of corruption and misconduct, has been plagued by myriad crises in recent years, including widespread criminal ac-

tivity among employees, systemic sexual abuse at a federal women's prison in California, critically low staffing levels that have hampered responses to emergencies, the rapid spread of COVID-19, a failed response to the pandemic and dozens of escapes. And late last month, two inmates were killed in a gang clash at a federal penitentiary in Texas, prompting a nationwide lockdown. □

Trump must testify in New York investigation, judge rules

By MICHAEL R. SISAK

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump must answer questions under oath in New York state's civil investigation into his business practices, a judge ruled Thursday.

Judge Arthur Engoron ordered Trump and his two eldest children, Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr., to comply with subpoenas issued in December by New York Attorney General Letitia James.

Trump and his two children must sit for a deposition within 21 days, Engoron said. Engoron issued the ruling after a two-hour hearing with lawyers for the Trumps and James' office.

"In the final analysis, a State Attorney General commences investigating a business entity, uncovers copious evidence of possible financial fraud, and wants to question, under oath, several of the entities' principals, including its namesake. She has the clear right to do so," Engoron wrote in his decision.

The ruling is almost certain to be appealed, but if upheld it could force the former president into a tough decision about whether to answer questions, or stay silent, citing his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

Spokespeople for Trump did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the ruling.

James, a Democrat, said her investigation has uncovered evidence Trump's company used "fraudulent or misleading" valuations of assets like golf courses and skyscrapers to get loans and tax benefits.

Trump's lawyers told Engoron during the hearing that having him sit for a civil deposition now, while his company is also the subject of a parallel criminal investigation, is an improper attempt to get around a state law barring prosecutors from calling someone to testify before a criminal grand jury without giving them immunity.

"If she wants sworn testimony from my client, he's

entitled to immunity. He gets immunity for what he

case?" Fischetti said.

A lawyer for the attorney

criminal probe.

She said the civil investiga-



Former president Donald Trump speaks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) Sunday, Feb. 28, 2021, in Orlando, Fla.

Associated Press

says, or he says nothing," Trump's criminal defense lawyer, Ronald Fischetti, said in the hearing, which was conducted by video conference.

If Trump were to testify in the civil probe, anything he says could be used against him in the criminal investigation being overseen by the Manhattan district attorney's office.

Trump could invoke his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent in a deposition — something he's criticized others for doing in the past. But Fischetti said if Trump did so, it could still hurt a potential criminal defense. "If he goes in and follows my advice, which will be you cannot answer these questions without ... immunity because that's what the law provides, and take the Fifth Amendment, that'll be on every front page in the newspaper in the world. And how can I possibly pick a jury in that

general's office, Kevin Wallace, told the judge that it wasn't unusual to have civil and criminal investigations proceeding at the same time.

"Mr. Trump is a high profile individual, yes. That's unique," Wallace said. "It's unique that so many people are paying attention to a rather dry hearing about subpoena enforcement. But the legal issues that we're dealing with here are pretty standard."

Another Trump son, Eric Trump, and the Trump Organization's finance chief Allen Weisselberg, have previously sat for depositions in the civil investigation — and invoked their Fifth Amendment rights hundreds of times when they were questioned by investigators in 2020.

Another lawyer for Donald Trump, Alina Habba, accused James of trying to use the civil investigation to gather evidence for the

tion should be stayed until the criminal matter is over, claiming James' office is putting the Trumps "in a position where they either disclose evidence in a civil investigation or they have to invoke the constitutional right not to testify, thereby triggering an adverse inference in the civil action."

"How is that fair, your Honor? We have to stop one," she said.

Alan Futerfas, a lawyer for Ivanka and Donald Trump Jr., both of whom have been executives in their family's Trump Organization, said during the court hearing that so far he had no reason to believe either are targets of the district attorney's criminal investigation.

In a statement Tuesday, Trump railed against what he called a "sham investigation of a great company that has done a spectacular job for New York and beyond" and a racially

motivated "continuation of a Witch Hunt the likes of which has never been seen in this Country before."

Habba argued at Thursday's hearing that James' investigation is "selective prosecution" and that the attorney general is "engaging in viewpoint discrimination" motivated by her political ambitions and disdain for the Republican former president, evinced by comments she made over the years about going after Trump.

"We have an extraordinary rare case where we can prove selective prosecution because she's put her words out there so much and taken every opportunity to voice her vendetta against Donald Trump and his family to take him down," Habba said.

Wallace noted the state attorney general's office was investigating Trump-related matters as far back as 2013, including probes into his charitable foundation and a Trump University real estate training program that started long before James was elected.

In a court filing this week, James included a letter from Trump's longtime accounting firm advising him to no longer rely on years of financial statements it prepared based on his company's valuations, given the questions about their accuracy.

James tweeted after the ruling Thursday: "No one will be permitted to stand in the way of the pursuit of justice, no matter how powerful they are."

Last summer, spurred by evidence uncovered in James' civil investigation, the Manhattan district attorney's office charged Weisselberg and the Trump Organization with tax fraud, alleging he collected more than \$1.7 million in off-the-books compensation. Weisselberg and the company have pleaded not guilty.

Engoron previously sided with James on other matters relating to the probe, including making Eric Trump testify after his lawyers abruptly canceled a scheduled deposition. □

No new settlement yet of opioid claims against Purdue Pharma

By GEOFF MULVIGHILL

Associated Press

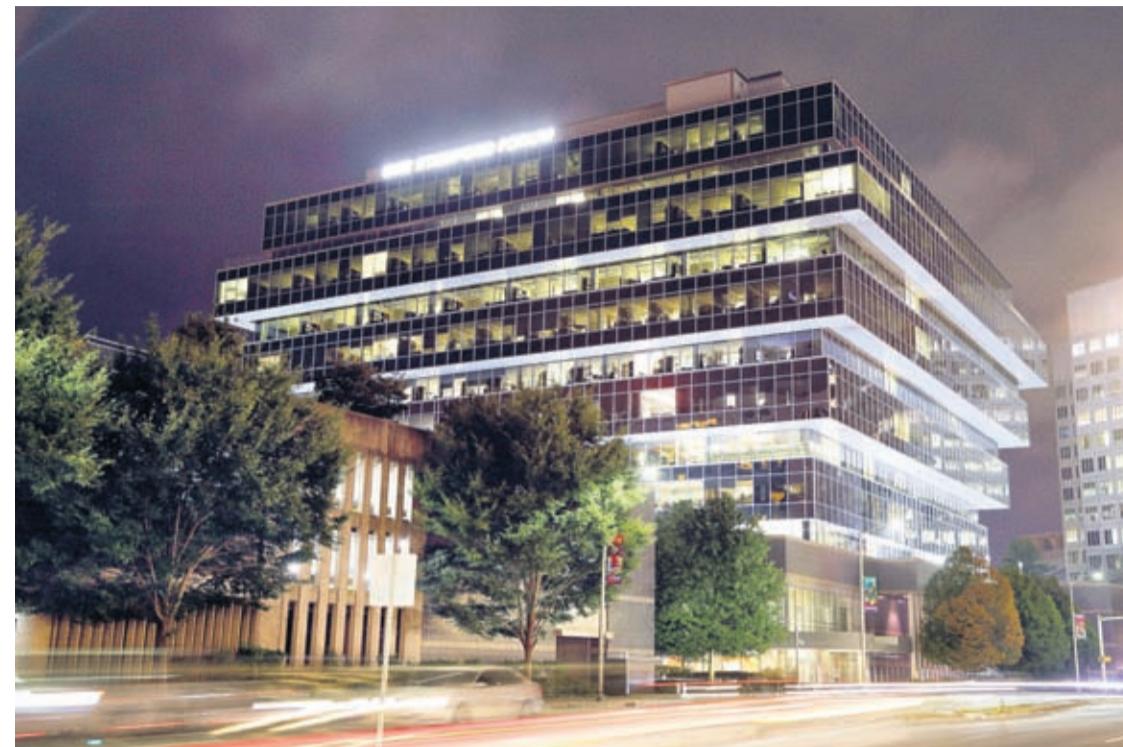
OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma and a group of states have not been able to agree on a multibillion-dollar settlement of lawsuits over the drug's role in the opioid crisis after more than a month of mediation.

A mediator could call for still more talks between the parties, Purdue lawyer Marshall Huebner said at a hearing Thursday, indicating there could be a call for further mediation.

At the hearing, conducted by video conference from his White Plains, New York, courtroom, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert Drain extended until March 3 legal protections for the company and its owners that had been set to expire Thursday to allow more time for a deal.

"This case is too significant to too many people and governmental entities and other parties of interest to be making knee-jerk reactions in light of a process that is still unfolding," Drain said.

Stamford, Connecticut-based Purdue and members of the Sackler family who own it have been cast as villains in the opioid overdose and addiction crisis that has claimed the lives of more than 500,000



Cars pass Purdue Pharma headquarters, Sept. 12, 2019, in Stamford, Conn.

Associated Press

Americans over the past two decades.

While OxyContin is among the best-known prescription opioids, state, local and Native American governments have been suing — and in many cases, settling with — many other companies that make or distribute drugs over the toll of opioids.

With lawsuits over Purdue's role mounting, the company filed for bankruptcy protection in 2019. Last year, lawyers for local governments and most states agreed to a deal to settle

all the claims against the company.

Members of the Sackler family would give up ownership of the company, which would become a new entity with profits dedicated to fighting the drug crisis. Family members would also contribute \$4.5 billion in cash and charitable assets. In exchange, family members would also be shielded from civil lawsuits over the toll of opioids. Most attorneys general agreed to the deal, which would have required that most of the money be used

to fight the opioid crisis, sent \$750 million to individual victims or their survivors, and made public millions of company documents.

But the attorneys general for eight states and the District of Columbia refused to sign on, contending the deal didn't do enough to hold the Sacklers accountable. And after the bankruptcy judge approved the deal, those holdouts prevailed on appeal, persuading another judge last December to reject the settlement by ruling that bankruptcy courts could

not provide legal protections to parties not in bankruptcy if others objected. That ruling prompted a new round of mediation with hundreds of hours of meetings in person, by phone and Zoom, to try to reach a deal between the company and the holdout attorneys general representing California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington state.

In reports filed Jan. 31 and Feb. 8, the mediator, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Shelley Chapman, said a deal including more money from Sackler family members was close. Drain gave the parties a deadline of Wednesday to reach an agreement.

They didn't get there, at least not as of late morning Thursday.

Huebner, the Purdue lawyer, told Drain that he expected Chapman to file a new report by Friday. Other parties have not commented.

In the meantime, a group of seven Democratic U.S. senators this week sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice to call for criminal charges against Sackler family members to be considered. □



Members of the U.S. Coast Guard stand alongside bundles of seized cocaine and marijuana worth more than one billion dollars, aboard Coast Guard Cutter James at Port Everglades, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Associated Press

By JOSHUA GOODMAN

Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Florida

(AP) — A U.S. Coast Guard vessel on Thursday offloaded more than 30 metric tons

of cocaine and marijuana reportedly worth over \$1 billion that was seized at sea during a months-long deployment off the coast of South America.

U.S. Coast Guard offloads \$1 billion worth of narcotics

The haul of illegal narcotics brought home by the U.S. Coast Guard cutter James was one of the biggest in recent memory, a reflection of increasingly sophisticated U.S. arsenal that includes powerful drones and special infrared cameras that can detect heat from small cocaine-laden vessels.

But it also highlights a recent surge in narcotics coming from Colombia, a close U.S. ally and the world's top producer of cocaine.

The Biden administration's top anti-narcotics officials traveled to South Florida to welcome back the vessel's

crew and tout the Coast Guard's role interdicting drugs before they reach American streets.

"We are hitting the drug traffickers where it hits them most: their pocketbooks," said Dr. Rahul Gupta, head of the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Gupta said the Biden administration is seeking to increase the U.S. government's budget to build up the nation's addiction treatment infrastructure and reduce the supply of synthetic opioids like fentanyl and other drugs.

But the record busts of late by the Coast Guard, fed-

eral law enforcement and partner nations also underscores how little the flow of cocaine coming from Latin America has eased since President Richard Nixon declared war on drugs a half century ago.

Coca cultivation in Colombia in 2020 soared to 245,000 hectares (945 square miles), enough to produce 1,010 metric tons of cocaine, according to the White House's latest report on harvesting trends in the Andean region. As recently as 2014, potential production was less than half that amount. Production in Peru and Bolivia has also steadily risen. □

Study says Dutch troops used 'extreme' violence in Indonesia

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — Dutch troops used "extreme violence" often deliberately during Indonesia's 1940s war for independence, and military leaders and politicians in the Netherlands largely ignored the excesses, a long-running research project concluded in findings published Thursday.

The 4 1/2-year investigation by experts from three historical research institutes contradicts the Dutch government's long-held view that the country's troops engaged in extreme violence only sporadically as they battled pro-independence forces in what became Indonesia.

In a statement, the researchers said the sources they consulted "show that the use of extreme violence by the Dutch armed forces was not only widespread, but often deliberate, too. It was condoned at every



An Indonesian national Red-White flag waves from a car driven through an off-road track as Mount Merapi, one of the most active volcanoes in the country, is seen spewing volcanic smoke, during an Independence Day celebration in Sleman, Indonesia, Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021.

Associated Press

level: political, military and legal."

The researchers said it was not possible to give exact numbers of crimes and victims.

In 2013, the Dutch govern-

ment apologized for some atrocities committed by its forces between 1945, when Indonesia declared its independence from Dutch colonial rule, and 1949, when the Netherlands final-

ly recognized Indonesia's independence.

Dutch King Willem-Alexander formally apologized during a 2020 state visit to Indonesia for his country's past aggression. □

EU border agency to help Cyprus with migrant repatriations

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — The chief of the European Union's Frontex border agency said Wednesday that the repatriation of migrants is Cyprus' "most urgent need" and that his organization is ready to facilitate flights to return home people who had asylum claims rejected in Cyprus.

Frontex chief Fabrice Leggeri said after talks Wednesday with Cypriot Interior Minister Nicos Nouris that the small east Mediterranean island nation faces an "extraordinary challenge" that requires "extraordinary support" from Frontex amid increased migrant arrivals that the government says has stretched its ability to cope.

Leggeri said Frontex can bring in consular officials from foreign countries to confirm the identity of migrants and obtain permission to repatriate them. He said the agency can also organize flights directly from Cyprus, or with the assistance of other EU members.

"I realized even more the challenge that Cyprus is facing," Leggeri said.

Nouris repeated that the vast majority of asylum-seekers reaching the island are channeled through Turkey to the ethnically divided island's breakaway Turkish Cypriot north.

Some 85% of migrant arrivals cross a porous, United Nations-controlled buffer zone to apply for asylum in the internationally recognized Greek Cypriot south.

Cyprus was split in 1974 when Turkey invaded following a coup aiming at union with Greece. Although Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, only the south enjoys full membership benefits. □

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Thursday that the investigation's findings were a reason for him to reiterate apologies "for the systematic and widespread extreme violence on the part of the Dutch side in those years and the consistent way previous Cabinets looked away."

"I would like to make a deep apology on behalf of the Dutch government to the people of Indonesia today," Rutte said.

He added that apologies also were owed to "everybody in our country who has had to live with the consequences of the colonial war in Indonesia, often right up until today."

A previous Dutch report, from 1969, acknowledged "violent excesses" in Indonesia but argued that Dutch troops were conducting a "police action" often incited by guerrilla warfare and terror attacks targeting perceived opponents of independence. □



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Group alleges U.S. firm's tanker illicitly traded Iran oil

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A tanker owned by a Los Angeles-based private equity firm likely took part in the illicit trade of Iranian crude oil at sea despite American sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic amid the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers, an advocacy group alleges. The firm said Thursday it is co-operating with U.S. government investigators.

The group United Against Nuclear Iran raised its allegations in a letter dated Tuesday to Oaktree Capital Management, which holds assets worth over \$160 billion. Satellite images and maritime tracking data analyzed by The Associated Press correspond to the group's identification of the vessels allegedly involved and showed them side-by-side off the coast of Singapore on Saturday. The alleged oil transfer comes as world powers and Iran negotiate in Vienna over restoring the nuclear deal.

That accord saw Tehran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of



In this satellite photo provided by Planet Labs PBC, vessels identified as the Virgo, left, and the Suez Rajan by the advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran are seen in the South China Sea on Saturday, Feb. 13, 2022.

economic sanctions including those targeting its crucial oil sales.

But Iran even under American sanctions claims to be selling billions of dollars more of crude than before, likely buoyed by energy prices rising to their highest point in years amid the ongoing Ukraine crisis. That makes the sales even more lucrative and increases the challenge of enforcing sanctions if the Vienna talks collapse.

In a statement to the AP,

Oaktree subsidiary Fleetscape which owns the oil tanker Suez Rajan said it is "committed to using best practices in its operations and complying with U.S. sanctions laws."

"We take any allegation of non-compliance very seriously and are cooperating fully with the U.S. authorities to conduct a thorough investigation into this matter," Fleetscape said.

The company did not elaborate. The U.S. State Department did not immedi-

ately respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. Treasury, which investigates and enforces sanctions, declined to comment.

Satellite-tracking data from MarineTraffic.com analyzed by the AP showed the Marshall Island-flagged Suez Rajan in the South China Sea off the northeast of Singapore on Saturday. That data also shows the Panamanian-flagged oil tanker Virgo in the same area. Satellite photos from

Associated Press

Planet Labs PBC of that area obtained by the AP appear to show the ships alongside each other.

At sea, oil tankers can funnel crude between each other in a ship-to-ship transfer that typically sees boats in a similar position.

In separate Planet Labs satellite images from Jan. 16, the Virgo appears to be loading crude oil from Iran's Khargh Island, its main oil distribution terminal in the Persian Gulf.

Tracking data separately shows the vessel near Khargh around that time before heading to Singapore.

United Nations records show the Virgo's owners as a company out of Suriname, which could not be immediately reached for comment.

Iran's mission to the United Nations also did not respond to a request for comment.

Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers saw it regain the ability to sell oil openly on the international market.

But in 2018, then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord and re-imposed American sanctions. □

Thai royalists submit petition to oust Amnesty International

BANGKOK (AP) — Thai royalists on Thursday stepped up their campaign to drive out the country's branch of rights group Amnesty International, handing over copies of a petition to gov-

ernment ministries that they say is backed by more than a million signatures.

About 200 protesters mainly clad in yellow, a color closely associated with the monarchy gathered oppo-

site Government House in Bangkok. Representatives from the Labor Ministry and the National Security Council accepted envelopes containing their demands. The group later submitted the petition to the Interior Ministry.

The activists, members of various small nationalist groups, say Amnesty International is a threat to the country's peace and security because it criticized a court ruling that said calls to reform the country's constitutional monarchy are illegal.

The monarchy is revered by many Thais and until recently was almost universally treated as a sacrosanct pillar of Thai identity. Its reputation is fiercely guarded by the country's

ruling elite, including the courts and the military.

Critics of the royal institution say it has too much influence in politics and is not accountable.

"We are here to proclaim that what they have done from the past until now we are not happy with them, and we will ask our prime minister, General Prayuth Chan-ocha, to take action with this," said one of the protesters, 60-year-old Chutima Liamthong.

The petition was launched after Amnesty International criticized the Constitutional Court for ruling that three pro-democracy activists who had called for reform of the monarchy were committing sedition by attempting to overthrow the nation's system of govern-

ment with the king as head of state.

The activists say they have gathered 1.2 million signatures in support of their campaign, but that figure has yet to be confirmed.

Seksakol Atthawong, a vice minister in the Prime Minister's Office who has been spearheading the move against the organization, was uncompromising as he addressed the protesters on Thursday.

"Thailand lived in peace, Thailand lived normally until these people came to support those who want to overthrow the monarchy, destroy national security, destroy the running of the country, destroy the normal Thai way of life and create chaos in the country," he said. □



Thai royalists protesters hold a sign against Amnesty International Thailand during the protest in Bangkok, Thailand, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022.

Associated Press

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Shortages, inflation frustrate Cubans struggling to get by

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ

Associated Press

Julia Sardiñas awoke early so she could reach a grocery store in Cuba's capital by 6 a.m.

After seven hours in line, she achieved her goal: the purchase of two plastic 1 liter bottles of cooking oil for which she paid 48 Cuban pesos \$2 each.

"I was standing for many hours; you have to wait your turn to be able enter for two bottles, but it's something," said the retired 65-year-old.

Grocery shopping has become an increasingly costly and arduous struggle for many people in a country where the pandemic, inefficient production, government controls and U.S. economic sanctions have aggravated an economic crisis. A drastic drop in crucial tourism income caused by COVID-19 helped spur the government last year to adopt reforms it had long considered. Those included elimination of an inefficient dual currency system that had made the local peso in which most Cubans were paid a sort of second-class currency. It had been a poor cousin to the "convertible peso" used by tourists, people who worked with them and those who received money from relatives abroad.

Adoption of a single currency for all, along with shortages, led within a few months to sharply increased prices for many goods that weren't matched, for most at least, by the simultaneous rise in salaries.

And because the government has had trouble producing or importing all the goods needed, it also led to emergence of a black market, with people paying a premium for dollars or for scarce items.



Wearing masks amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a man transports a customer on a bicycle taxi in Havana, Cuba, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

That has led to limits on individual purchases. The state store where Sardiñas bought her oil scanned her identity card to ensure she wasn't buying more than two at a time.

The problems have fed a sense of inequity among many that is especially bitter in a socialist system that prides itself in a relatively equal distribution of goods. "It's impossible to maintain my family on my salary," complained Marcia Ochoa, a state worker who said she makes 2,400 pesos \$100 at the official rate each month and lives with her husband and elderly parents.

She said she depended on money sent by her son in the United States to help buy things like soap, shampoo and food.

Life became more complicated when the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump tightened economic sanctions on Cuba in November 2020 and blocked remittances via Western Union.

Her son used to send her roughly \$100 a month via Western Union. "I could go

to a store to shop and resolve many problems."

With those exchange houses closed, she relies on visitors who bring in money from her son and recently got about 70 pesos per dollar on the informal market nearly three times the official rate. That black market rate over the past week rose further, to about 100 to 1. To help confront shortages and bring in hard currency, the government also expanded a network of hard currency stores that are often better stocked but much more costly than standard shops. They now accept dollar-linked debit cards though not cash itself. Cubans can use euros or Canadian dollars to purchase such cards.

But long lines now are common both in local and hard currency stores, where products ranging from soap to beans to chicken tend to suddenly appear and rapidly vanish. That's led to an increasing black market as people speculate by buying what they can and reselling it days later when shortages increase.

pound) on the black market

"There are many factors (for the rising prices), but the principle is the fall in the supply of goods and services," said economist Omar Everleny Pérez.

The government itself has recognized inflation as a serious problem.

Economy Minister Alejandro Gil said overall prices rose by about 70% in 2021, though increases for some goods clearly have been far greater.

A carton of 30 eggs cost 150 pesos \$6 last year, but are now 400 pesos on the black market. A package of sausage that cost 40 pesos is now 118 even in official stores. Pork that used to cost 40 pesos a pound now goes for 200. □

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Travellers' Choice 2020

LOCAL



As of Thursday, February 17, all Covid measures have been eliminated

ORANJESTAD – On February 16, during a press conference, Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes announced that on February 17, 2022, all COVID-19 measures will be eliminated.

However, the Prime Minister emphasized that testing for admission to Aruba remains in force. Hence, everyone arriving in Aruba must test before entering. Testing is not required if fully vaccinated (must include booster shot). Residents can get a test in Aruba upon arrival. Please note that they must be fully vaccinated, including booster shot.

Elimination of the COVID measures, includes:

- Business closure is back to what is specified on the permit (vergunningstijd). No restrictions.
- No restrictions on number of diners at restaurant tables.
- Other COVID-19 measures in force at schools, businesses, and retirement



homes will also be eliminated.

However, recommendations remain in place:

- Wash your hands frequently;
- keep 1.5 meters distance;
- use face masks;
- get your vaccine or booster shot;
- ventilate indoor spaces;
- use COVID-19 self-tests;
- if you have symptoms stay inside and get tested;
- if an establishment requires the use of a face mask, you must comply. □

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Necessary conditions to promote economic development



ORANJESTAD - The government released the research report Entrepreneurship and Investment Climate Aruba. Improvement of the business and investment climate is a top priority of the government of Aruba. The vision is a dynamic business climate and stimulation of the economy. Through the years, implementation of reports issued by both local and international professionals, advising on necessary actions to improve the business and investment climate of Aruba, has been lacking.

Economic reforms aimed at a resilient, dynamic, and vibrant economy are also part of the Country Package. Measure E.6 aims to improve the business and investment climate of Aruba. As part of this effort, an independent consultancy firm, Economic Bureau Amsterdam, conducted research was conducted and provided advice. The basis of this research was the already-issued reports and stakeholder interviews.

The Minister of Economic Affairs, Communications, and Sustainable Development, Mr. Geoffrey Wever, gave a presentation to Parliament on February 14 on the progress of measure E.6 of the Land package and the implementation trajectory for the program "Reform business and investment climate Aruba". Subsequently, the released report "Entrepreneurship and Investment Climate Aruba" was made public on Tuesday, February 15, 2022.

As part of the economic reforms, the report proposes four priority projects that will substantially improve the business and investment climate:

- Accelerate and improve licensing decisions;
- Digital one-stop shop - A coherent licensing system behind one window;
- Implementation Aruba Fair Trade Authority;
- Efficiently open a bank account.

These projects are the prioritized projects to work on the preconditions for economic development. In addition to these projects, there are simultaneous projects to stimulate different sectors, advertise Aruba on the international panorama, offer incentives to stimulate the economy and maintain the dialogue with potential investors. Minister Geoffrey Wever: "These four projects are essential preconditions for creating the necessary conditions to promote the economic development of our Aruba. Shared vision and cooperation are needed to achieve concrete results. □

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Medlab Aruba 'fit-2-fly': Covid-19 testing on the

NOORD — While on vacation, the last thing you need to worry about is what to do or where to go for your COVID-19 testing. Many countries, including the U.S. require for all passengers heading back home to present with a negative test result for PCR or Antigen 72 hours prior to departure.

MEDLAB Aruba is an accredited ISO 15189:2012 OGA-LE 23-08 laboratory with over 30 years of experience on the island. The laboratory complies with the Department of Public Health of Aruba, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirements for COVID-19 testing. MEDLAB Aruba has been assigned as one of the private laboratories

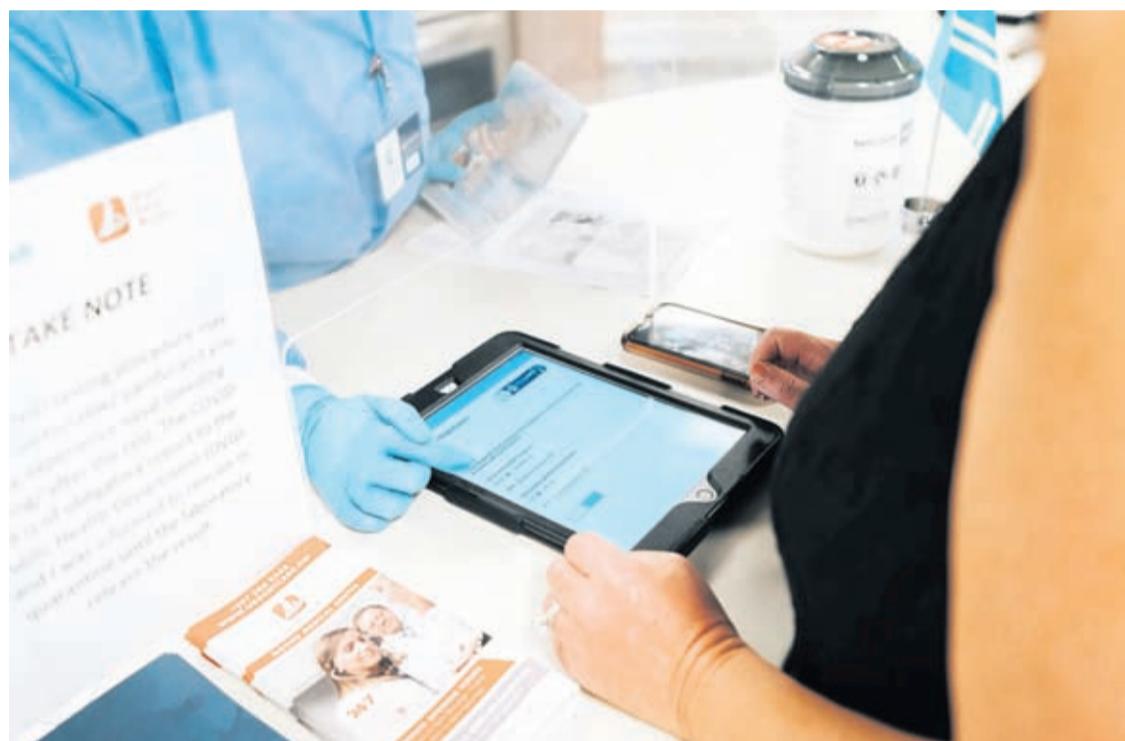
authorized to perform "Fit-2-Fly" testing for departing passengers.

Hassle free scheduling – QR-code

The laboratory has invested on the only fully integrated digital booking platform on the island that allows guests to pre-register for the testing prior to coming to Aruba and have all their information incorporated upon entry to any of the available testing centers. Guests will receive a confirmation email with QR-code that will be requested upon day of testing to facilitate a faster turn-around time for your results.

Testing options

Offering three method of testing gives you, our island



visitors, the possibility to choose which service is at your convenience. Recommended time to complete test prior to departure is 48 (72) hours. We also request for you to bring your passport to the appointment.

Testing Option 1: Walk-In service at our location in Noord Medical Center (NMC), Noord 63 or at Superfood COVID Testing Center. You may also book online at WWW.COVIDARUBA.COM and choose location.

Other hotel location. We come to you for the test together with our vehicular Mobile Health Test Unit. We require a minimum of six people for this service. Request/ Book appointment through WhatsApp number +297 5975548.



Testing Option 2: On-site at participating hotels. Only guests staying on these properties will be allowed to conduct the test. Appointment is also made online at WWW.COVIDARUBA.COM.

The participating hotels with testing facilities are Aruba Marriott Resort (Stellaris, Ocean and Surf Club), Holiday Inn, Playa Linda Beach Resort, RIU Antillas, RIU Palace, Eagle Resort, Costa Linda Beach Resort, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Manchebo Beach Resort, Casa del Mar & Aruba Beach Club, Caribbean Palm Village.

Testing Option 3: Airbnb/

Price

Offering a great rate for the testing. The Antigen test is at \$50 and the PCR at \$100. Payment method is card (preferred), cash (hygiene measures).

The COVID Test is not covered by the Aruba Visitor's Insurance, but you are able to seek reimbursement once back home.

Results

Turn-around time for results is within 24 hours. Result is sent electronically to your email (check spam/ junk folder)

For more information visit www.covidaruba.com, call us at +297 5975548 or email us at covid@lab.aw. □



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SCAN ME



An unforgettable dining experience awaits you at Tierra del Sol



NOORD — Imagine dining with a panoramic view surrounded by the golf's greens, the island's rugged north coast and the mesmerizing blue ocean in a relax dining experience, delighted in fresh cuisine with Caribbean, European and American flavors. Inspired by nature the restaurant is letting in the outside while the menu reflects what guests are looking for nowadays: variation, adults & younger diners choices, great prices with a friendly

service. That is the great thing about the re-opened casually elegant restaurant at Tierra del Sol: it is for everyone and every occasion!

The Restaurant at Tierra del Sol transformed into a place of light, fresh looks, elegant though laid-back setting and the choice between inside and outside dining. Those two areas flow into each other in a natural way. Families with children dine on the big tables, some business people take a quick bite inside and a group of golfers enjoy a meal after their game. It is a fantastic concept that is accessible for all without losing its essence: great food in a stylish interior design overlooking the spectacular view.

Lunch with unmatched views

Guests praise Tierra del Sol restaurant for the magnificent views making it a popular lunch spot as well as a great after-golf lunch experience. Locals and visitors have been coming for years to Tierra del Sol to unwind and let go in this elegant yet laid-back setting. Savoring some hand-held delicacies such as Crispy Chicken Caesar Wrap, Fish or Steak Tacos or a Classic Burger are just a few to mention and for those Pizza and Pasta lover's they have a great selection of dishes as well.

Divine Dining

Tune in for a culinary experience that will give dining another perspective. We are not talking about the standard 3-course menu, but about a journey through taste-land. The Restaurant at Tierra del Sol invites



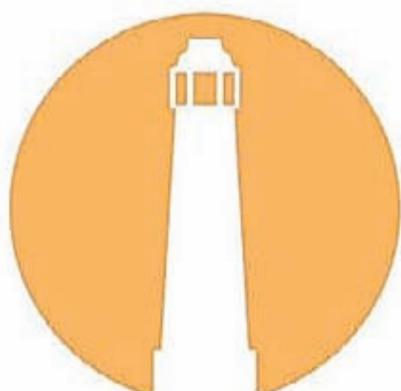
you to taste as many items as you wish from their extensive dining menu.

Fresh Oysters, Escargots, Flash seared Tuna Tataki, Beef Carpaccio, Cheese and Charcuterie Board or TDS Wedge Salad are only some of the welcoming dishes. For the main courses you can enjoy the Fresh Catch of the day, Caribbean Seafood, Filet Mignon, Lobster Thermidor, Korean Pork Chop, Vegan Bowl or Fettuccini Truffle Carbonara among others. Top it off with a sweet surrender of a caramel flan, New York Cheesecake or Chocolate Mousse are one of the choices.

The friendly staff is looking forward in welcoming you!
Indulge into this culinary discovery at the most splendid scenery of our One Happy Island.

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Tierra del Sol
Aruba

Aruba to me

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How to protect your spending power from inflation

By HAL M. BUNDICK of NerdWallet

Inflation — the rise in consumer prices — is a slow erosion of your money over time. Before 2021, the United States hadn't seen annual core inflation much above 3% for the better part of 25 years, says Michael Ashton, managing principal of Enduring Investments, a consulting and investing firm in Morristown, New Jersey.

So the 7.5% spike seen over the past year in the costs of fuel, used vehicles, groceries and just about everything else is the kind of sudden and systemic rise that can give a jolt to most peoples' everyday spending.

Ashton also says that the COVID-19 pandemic stimulus checks and tax relief, combined with the re-opening of the economy, fed consumer demand but didn't replace product inventories. The result: shortages that lead to higher prices.

"Having supply chain difficulties is part of what inflation looks like," Ashton says. With inflation chipping away at your spending power, how can you protect yourself?

EXAMINE YOUR SPENDING

Trim discretionary spending, voluntary spending in categories like entertainment or travel, by just 5%. This is one of those incremental changes that isn't that difficult to do and



In this Tuesday, June 15, 2021 photograph, beef is displayed in the meat department at Lambert's Rainbow Market, in Westwood, Mass.

Associated Press

goes directly to your personal bottom line.

Don't delay a major purchase; prices will likely rise.

Shop strategically. Buy more generic brand products and prescriptions. Save on necessary expenses by using coupons and store loyalty programs. Use membership cards (like Walmart+ and others) to pay 5 cents less per gallon for gasoline.

LOOK FOR SAVINGS

Eliminate any fees you pay for credit cards or bank accounts (late fees, monthly or annual service fees, ATM fees, etc.). Many banks are waiving such fees and credit cards often have fee-free options.

Renegotiate your cable, streaming or cell phone bill for any possible savings.

"I can say from my own

personal experience — it's amazing how easy this is," Ashton notes. He says that every time he would call his cell phone provider, it would offer him a plan that was far better than his current one. "And it doesn't happen unless you call," Ashton adds.

He now makes a habit of calling once a year and asking, "What's the best plan you have and should I be on that?"

Reduce the number of subscriptions you have, even if by just one.

"You should do an audit of those from time to time because sometimes they sneak in a price increase, and it just shows up on your credit card," Ashton says.

TRY TO BRING MORE MONEY IN

Search for financial institu-

holds a doctorate in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has become an avid proponent of I bonds.

I bonds rates are keyed to the rate of inflation, which lately has been over 7%, he notes. They are a perfect safe haven for near-term savings. And not a bad addition to your long-term nest egg, too.

A minimum investment in I bonds through TreasuryDirect.com is only \$25, and an individual can put up to \$10,000 annually into the savings bonds with electronic purchases. The bonds pay fixed interest plus the inflation rate, adjusted twice per year.

You can withdraw your savings without penalty after one year, but if you cash them in before five years, you'll lose the last three months' worth of interest.

"So what you get is essentially a savings account that can't go down, and that's going to go up with inflation," Bodie adds. "Do I need to say more?"

INFLATION IS NOT THE SAME FOR EVERYONE

Inflation hit a 7.5% national average in January, but that's not likely to be your inflation rate, says Ashton.

You may consume different items than the average person and you may not live in an average place, so your particular rate of inflation quite likely varies from the average, according to Ashton. □

Visa, Amazon announce worldwide payment agreement

NEW YORK (AP) — Visa Inc. and Amazon.com Inc. announced an agreement Thursday that allows customers to use Visa cards on Amazon sites worldwide without additional fees. The companies also agreed to collaborate on product and technology initiatives for "innovative payment experiences," Visa said in an email.

Credit card fees have been a growing source of tension between Amazon and Visa.

Last year, Amazon started charging customers in Australia and Singapore who use Visa credit cards a 0.5% surcharge.

Under the agreement, Amazon's amazon.co.uk site in Britain will no longer turn off Visa credit cards. Customers in Australia and Singapore will no longer pay the surcharge for using Visa.

Last month, Amazon's British website backed away from plans to stop accepting Visa credit cards issued in the United Kingdom, say-

ing the two sides were talking.

Amazon had announced the move in November, blaming "the high fees Visa charges for processing credit card transactions."

Any credit card transaction involves various fees, such as an "interchange fee" that the shopper's bank pays to the retailer's bank and other costs like service and technology charges. It wasn't clear which fee was the focus of the U.K. dispute. □



The logo for Amazon.com Inc. is displayed on a screen at the Nasdaq MarketSite, July 27, 2018.

Associated Press

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 36 Extreme

1 Racket 38 Throw

5 Reach 39 Parrot
across 40 Iditarod9 Women's need
quarters 41 Quick kiss11 Garage
buy

13 Peace

goddess

14 Put in

office

15 Settle

the bill

16 Try for
enrollment
in

18 Patsies

20 Crew

need

21 Apartment
worker

22 Trial

group

23 Way off

24 Orange

tuber

25 Sweater
material27 Neighbor
of Egypt

29 Slip

30 Funny

32 Thief's

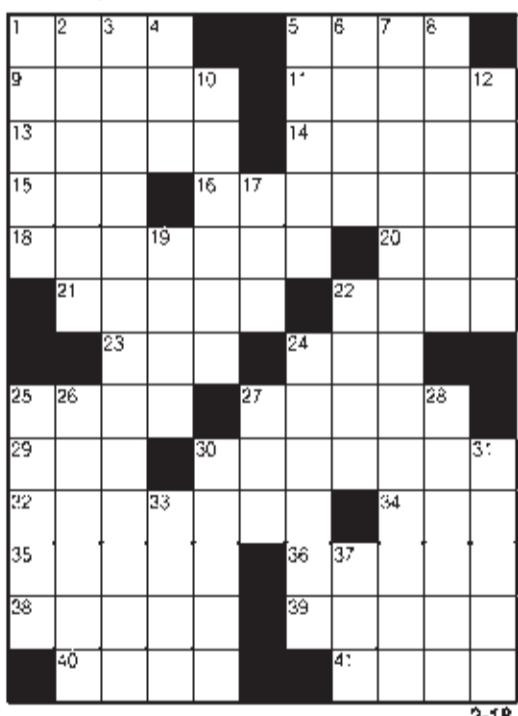
crime

34 Georgia

airport

code

35 Place

**Yesterday's answer**AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-18

CRYPTOQUOTE

O B N Z F E Q X W P N Z B P O A

H T N V Z P N Z U A K G E A K

T V A F O B E ' Z K N Z O T C Z ,

— C Q I X N Q Z Z W E Q Z

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE HISTORY OF HUMAN OPINION IS SCARCELY ANYTHING MORE THAN THE HISTORY OF HUMAN ERRORS.
— VOLTAIRE

U.S. approves new headlights that won't blind oncoming drivers

By TOM KRISHER

AP Auto Writer

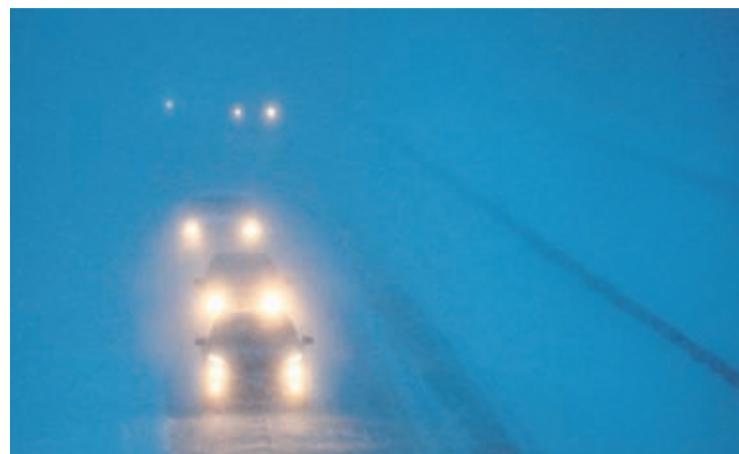
DETROIT (AP) — Anyone who has ever been temporarily blinded by high-beam headlights from an oncoming car will be happy to hear this.

U.S. highway safety regulators are about to allow new high-tech headlights that can automatically tailor beams so they focus on dark areas of the road and don't create glare for oncoming drivers.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says it issued a final rule allowing what's called "adaptive driving beam headlights" on new vehicles. It will go into effect when published in the Federal Register in the next few days.

The headlights, commonly used in Europe, have LED lamps that can focus beams on darkness such as the driver's lane and areas along the roadside. They also lower the intensity of the light beams if there's oncoming traffic. Camera sensors and computers help determine where the light should go.

"This final rule will improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists by making them more visible at night, and will help prevent crashes by better illuminating animals and objects in and along the road," the agency said



Headlights from morning commuters can be seen through blowing snow as they make their way along Highway 441, on Jan. 28, 2019, in Appleton, Wis.

Associated Press

in a news release on Tuesday. The new rule, which was supported by the auto industry, comes as the safety agency grapples with a dramatic rise in traffic deaths nationwide.

The number of U.S. traffic deaths surged in the first nine months of 2021 to 31,720, the government reported Tuesday, keeping up a record pace of increased dangerous driving during the coronavirus pandemic.

The estimated figure of people dying in motor vehicle crashes from January to September 2021 was 12% higher than the same period in 2020. That represents the highest percentage increase over a nine-month period since the Transportation Department began recording fatal crash data in 1975. The

tally of 31,720 deaths was the highest nine-month figure since 2006.

Sam Abuelsamid, principal mobility analyst for Guidehouse Research, said the new lights will show up in higher-cost luxury vehicles at first, but will spread to more mainstream vehicles as the price of the technology falls.

Currently Audi charges \$3,000 for the top version of the lights in the U.S. on its e-tron Sportback electric vehicle. The adaptive beam lights are offered on most Audi models in the U.S., but until now, could not be used. An Audi spokesman says the company is evaluating whether the lights meet NHTSA standards and whether they can be activated in the future.

The technology uses an array of light emitting diodes that can change where light beams are sent, rather than the current technology of high beams hitting everywhere. "You have the ability to basically create a light pattern on the fly that is optimized for real-time conditions," Abuelsamid said. "You can cast the light where it's most useful." The new lights also will help partially automated driver assist systems keep cars in their lanes and avoid objects in front of the vehicles at night, Abuelsamid said. The new lighting regulation also comes more than 1 1/2 years ahead of a requirement in the bipartisan infrastructure law passed by Congress last year, NHTSA said. □

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Pakistan honors Bill Gates for efforts on poverty, disease

By MUNIR AHMED

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan awarded Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates its second-highest civilian honor on Thursday, in recognition of his work to alleviate poverty and diseases like polio and tuberculosis. On a daylong visit to the capital, Islamabad, Gates was given the prestigious Hilal-e-Pakistan award by President Arif Alvi in a televised ceremony, after he met with Prime Minister Imran Khan at his office.

"Pakistan's commitment to ending polio is inspiring," Gates said in a statement released by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates' foundation has helped nearly eradicate the disease.

"Government leaders, health workers, and parents are working tirelessly to ensure this disease never paralyzes a child again. This is the final, and hardest, phase of the eradication



In this photo released by Pakistan's Press Information Department, Pakistan's President Arif Alvi, left, listens to the Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates at a ceremony where he was awarded the country's second highest civilian award, Hilal-e-Pakistan, in Islamabad, Pakistan, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022.

Associated Press

effort, but by keeping up the momentum and staying vigilant, Pakistan has an opportunity to make history by ending polio for good," Gates said. The statement quoted Khan as thanking Gates and saying that polio eradication is a "top priority" for the government, which is working "at all levels to ensure that every child is protected with the polio vaccine."

According to a government statement, Khan during his meeting with Gates thanked the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its continued partnership with Pakistan to eradicate polio.

Later, Gates told reporters in Islamabad that he was

impressed by Pakistan's efforts. He said there polio had spread less in Pakistan than anticipated because people were moving around less during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said the eradication of polio in Pakistan was possible in a few years.

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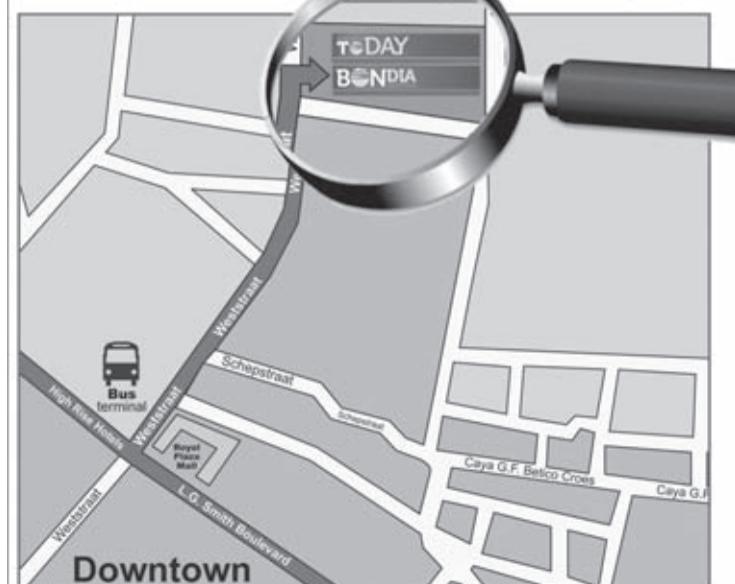
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"I think the steps taken in Pakistan during 2022 will probably set us up to finish polio eradication," he said. "I would say that the polio campaign helped the Covid campaign and now the Covid campaign is helping the polio campaign," Gates said. As for Afghanistan, he said that more polio vaccination was taking place there now compared to recent years. □



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WK 7 and 14 - all views

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2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
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2 Bed Ocean view \$8,000
2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
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Marriott Aruba Ocean Club

PLATINUM SEASON

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1 Bed ocean front \$13,000
1 Bed ocean View \$11,000

GOLD SEASON

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Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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Narcotics Anonymous
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Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
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Child Abuse Prevention
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Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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Phone Directory Tel. 118



facebook.com/arubatoday/

TV study: LGBTQ characters rise in number with streaming

By LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP)—LGBTQ representation on scripted TV series has grown along with the footprint of streaming services, according to an annual study by the advocacy group GLAAD.

"TV is leading entertainment in telling LGBTQ stories," Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of GLAAD, said in the "Where We Are on TV" report on the 2021-22 season that was released Thursday.

In recognition of the increased number and profile of streaming services, the study added five relative newcomers to the trio Amazon, Hulu and Netflix included in previous GLAAD diversity tallies.

Broadcast networks and cable channels are part of the study, which also looks at broadcast representation of women, people of color and those with disabilities. Netflix, which has consistently topped its streaming competitors in LGBTQ inclusivity, according to GLAAD, ranked first again, with 155 regularly seen or recurring characters on its original comedy and drama series.

By comparison, prime-time series on the ABC, CBS, CW, Fox and NBC networks include a combined 141 LGBTQ characters this season, according to the study.



This image released by Netflix shows Lee Rodriguez, left, and Christina Kartchner in a scene from "Never Have I Ever."

Associated Press

But GLAAD offered thinly veiled criticism of Netflix over its handling of Dave Chappelle's 2021 special "The Closer," which was faulted by people inside and outside the company for what they deemed anti-transgender humor. Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos later said he erred in addressing employee concerns, but the special remained on the streaming service. "It would be disingenuous to shine a light on Netflix's inclusive programming without also being clear on the harm Netflix did to

the LGBTQ community this past fall by doubling down on giving anti-LGBTQ content the reach and legitimacy of their platform and brand," the report said. Netflix declined comment. After last year's pandemic reduced the TV industry's output, the GLAAD report expressed satisfaction that the rebound didn't leave behind LGBTQ depictions. The growth in streaming services, including Apple TV+, Disney+, HBO Max, Paramount+ and Peacock, opened the door for more inclusive fare.

The following are among the report's findings, by platform:

STREAMING

There were 358 regularly seen and recurring LGBTQ characters in series offered by the eight streaming services included in the study, an increase of 217 from last year's total found on three streaming services. (Last year, only Amazon, Hulu and Netflix were tracked.) Helping Netflix retain its lead in LGBTQ depictions are foreign-language dramas with queer stories, the report said, including

"Young Royals" from Sweden, "Rebelde" from Mexico and "Elite" from Spain. They join the inclusive Netflix comedies "Never Have I Ever," "Q-Force" and "Sex Education." HBO Max, which launched in spring 2020, landed in second place in its first GLAAD tally. The service "quickly built a reputation for standout LGBTQ-inclusive comedy series," the report said, with the majority of its 71 LGBTQ characters found on comedies, including the Emmy-winning "Hacks," "The Sex Lives of College Girls" and "Sort Of."

BROADCAST NETWORKS

Of the 775 regularly appearing series characters on networks in prime time, 92 (11.9%) were LGBTQ. The previous record high, in the 2019-20 report, was 10.2%. Combining recurring and regular roles, LGBTQ characters totaled 141, a "significant increase" over last year's tally of 101, the report said.

In a first-time finding, lesbians represent the majority of LGBTQ characters on broadcast, with new characters introduced in series including "NCIS: Hawai'i" and "Law & Order: Organized Crime." The study called it a welcome and "noteworthy change" from TV's criticized portrayal of queer women as tragic figures. □



This image released by Eating Glass Records shows cover art for "PREY//IV," a release by Alice Glass.

Associated Press

Alice Glass takes back her voice in solo album

By BEATRICE DUPUY

Associated Press

Alice Glass is the blueprint for hyperpop — the new music genre loved by Gen Z and trending on TikTok. In her long-awaited solo full-length album, "PREY//IV," the queen of electro-punk is back and asking, "Where would you be without me?" She's in full control, using her raw voice and lyrics as she details the end of a toxic relationship and getting to a place where the "Sorrow Ends."

Glass parted ways with indie electronic pop group

Crystal Castles in 2014 and later publicly addressed abuse at the hands of a former bandmate. Her album, out Wednesday, makes references to darker times in Crystal Castles in the lyrics and the album title.

In her first song on the album symbolically named "Prey" she asks the listener: "Do you believe me? Does it matter?"

Through the vulnerability of her lyricism, Glass pulls back the curtain on her pain and stands in her power.

On "Prey//IV," the Canadian musician uses her voice

as an instrument to create a complex soundscape over dark electro-pop beats.

The song is a defining moment for Glass. It's her biting back at all those who have questioned her rise since leaving Crystal Castles.

At times, Glass pairs electronic dance beats with her haunting writing like in "Baby Teeth" and "The Hunted." She uses her vocals to move from anger and hurt on "The Hunted" as she warps into a punk scream. □

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Boxing rivals Khan, Brook to settle score 18 years in making

By STEVE DOUGLAS

AP Sports Writer

The feud was born in a pre-Olympic sparring session 18 years ago, when two feisty amateurs were starting out their boxing careers.

It will be settled on Saturday, with one of the former world champions maybe getting punched all the way into retirement.

No world titles will be on the line when Amir Khan and Kell Brook meet for an all-British fight at Manchester Arena that was sold out in 10 minutes. Those days appear long gone.

Instead, this long-awaited grudge match is about settling an old score. Scratching a big itch. Maybe securing one last big payday for two fighters on the way down from the top of boxing.

The enmity between the two 35-year-olds born six months and about 60 miles (100 kilometers) apart in northern England is real and long-lasting. Their



British boxers Amir Khan, left, and Kell Brook, right, speak during a press conference at the Exchange Hall, in Manchester, England, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022.

Associated Press

fight at a mutually agreed 149-pound catchweight has come a few years too late, but British boxing fans are just happy it's happening at all.

In 2004, Khan and Brook

were at an England Boxing training camp, with both looking to get into Britain's squad for the Olympic Games in Athens.

Khan eventually made it there, winning a silver

medal, and can remember what he called "great sparring sessions" that in his words saw him "school Kell in the ring."

"He hates me because I gave him a beating," said

Khan, who claimed he was told to only use one hand and to "take it easy" on Brook. "That has stuck with him. Now he envies my career and wonders why he couldn't have done what I did."

Khan went further on Thursday.

"I think Kell's always been very obsessed with my career," he said at the final pre-fight news conference. "He's been like a fan-boy and I've been living in his head for such a long time that I think it's come to the stage where he'll say, 'Amir, you need to start paying me some rent.'"

Khan (34-5, 21 KOs) is the more famous of the two, in Britain owing to his Olympic silver medal and in boxing worldwide for being the unified light-welterweight champion from 2009-12 who later fought and lost to big names like Canelo Alvarez, Danny Garcia and Terence Crawford in the United States. □

Nets hope for NYC vaccine mandate change so Irving can play

By BRIAN MAHONEY
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Brooklyn Nets are hopeful of a change to a local vaccine mandate that would make Kyrie Irving available for home games, one that New York City's mayor is "struggling" with whether to make.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said Wednesday he believed Mayor Eric Adams should look at the mandate, which requires athletes playing for the city's teams to be vaccinated against the coronavirus to

play in public venues.

Adams later agreed that there were problems with the rule, which doesn't apply to visiting players, but said he is hesitant to make a change.

The Nets hope he will.

"Obviously, we're hopeful but it's really out of our hands," coach Steve Nash said before the Nets beat the Knicks 111-106 at Madison Square Garden without Irving.

"We just have to be patient and hope that the oddity of it prevails in a sense, but that's not in my job de-

scription to write the city and state mandates. So I think we are hopeful and we're patient and we'll wait for hopefully the best outcome, but whatever outcome it is is out of our hands."

Silver said it's odd that the mandate only applies to players on the local teams while an unvaccinated opponent is allowed to play.

"I mean, I think if ultimately that rule is about protecting people who are in the arena, it just doesn't quite make sense to me that an away player who's unvac-



Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (11) drives past Miami Heat guard Kyle Lowry during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022, in Miami.

Associated Press

cinated can play in Barclays but the home player can't," Silver said in an interview with ESPN. Adams

was asked at a news conference later about Silver's comments and whether he might adjust the rule. □

Valieva tumbles out of the medals in Olympic figure skating

By BERNIE WILSON

AP Sports Writer

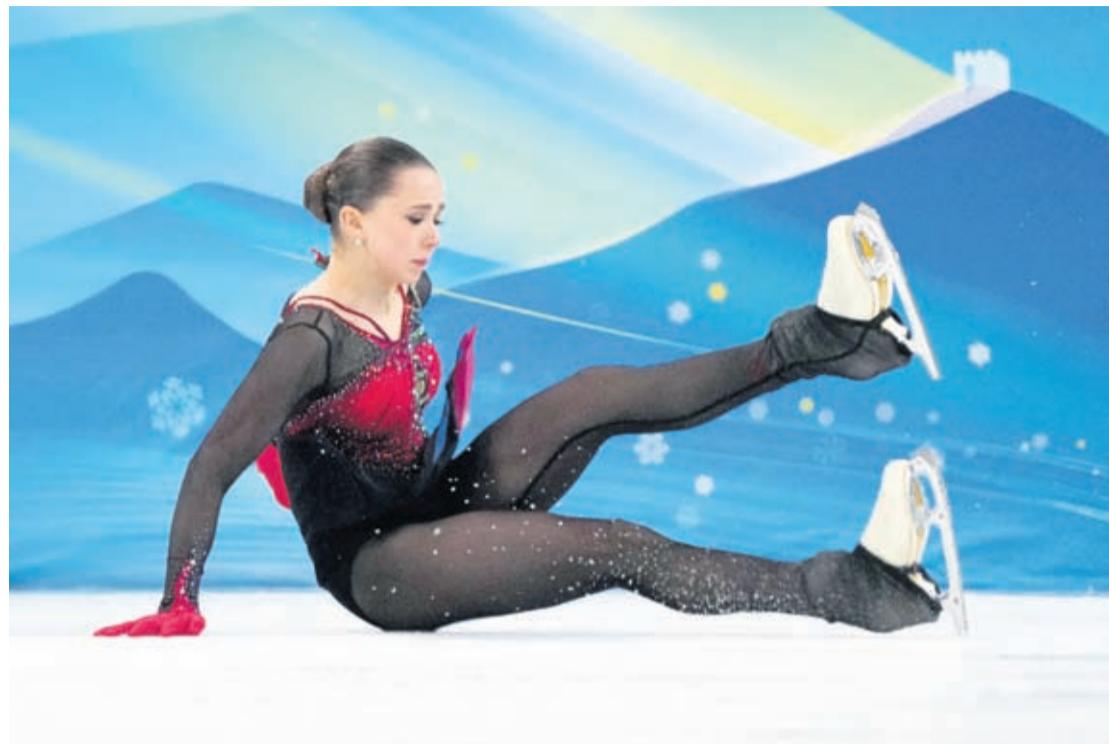
BEIJING (AP) — Bing Dwen Dwen stuffed pandas are already in the hands of the top three finishers in the women's figure skating competition at the Beijing Olympics. The medals are coming Friday.

Heavily favored Russian teen Kamila Valieva fell twice and had two other big mistakes in her free skate on Thursday, dropping to fourth place and allowing the International Olympic Committee to avoid what could have been one of the most awkward moments in the history of the Games.

Valieva was permitted to skate despite failing a doping test weeks before the Beijing Games. She was the leader after the short program but faltered badly in the free skate and teammate Anna Shcherbakova won the gold medal after a near-flawless program. Russian teammate Alexandra Trusova won the silver and Kaori Sakamoto of Japan took the bronze.

Valieva looked dejected and put her face in her hands after her program. She sobbed in the kiss-and-cry area.

Minutes later, the three medalists received stuffed pandas — the Beijing Games mascot — in the flower ceremony. The medals ceremony will be held Friday night. The IOC indicated that because Valieva is at the center of a



Kamila Valieva, of the Russian Olympic Committee, falls in the women's free skate program during the figure skating competition at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, in Beijing.

Associated Press

doping scandal that is still under investigation, neither ceremony would have been held if she finished in the top three.

Earlier Thursday, American star Mikaela Shiffrin skied out for the third time in five races, guaranteeing that she will leave Beijing without any individual medals. She was fifth after the first leg of the Alpine combined, the downhill, but then missed a gate just seconds into the slalom run and landed on her hip.

The 15-year-old Valieva put a jolt into the Beijing Games when she landed the first quadruple jumps by a woman at the Olympics and helped the Russians win the gold medal in the

team event last week. There was no such magic Thursday. She stumbled on her opening quad, fell on two other quads and spun out on another jump.

Valieva tested positive for a banned heart medication at the Russian championships in December. The result wasn't announced until last week, shortly after the team event.

She was cleared to compete earlier this week by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which ruled among other things that she had protected status as a minor and would suffer "irreparable harm" if she was not allowed to perform. The court did not rule on the full scope of the case, leaving

that to a more comprehensive investigation later. IOC President Thomas Bach skipped the free skate competition. He has offered Olympic torches to the U.S. figure skaters who won team silver medals as a holdover gift while they await the resolution of the doping case, The Associated Press learned late Wednesday.

SHIFFRIN OUT

Mikaela Shiffrin arrived in the mountains above Beijing heavily favored to add to her career haul of two gold medals and one silver. After entering all the individual events, she was a startling 0 for 5 with three DNFs — Did Not Finish. Among the races she skied

out of were her two best events, the giant slalom and the slalom. The two times she made it all the way down the course, she finished ninth in the super-G and 18th in the downhill.

She had a promising run in the downhill leg of the combined, but then she missed a gate and fell just seconds into the slalom run. Shiffrin sat for a few moments in the snow alongside the course. When she eventually got up, she shook her head, then looked up at the hill.

"I'm certainly questioning a lot," Shiffrin said. "I'm really disappointed. And I'm really frustrated."

Shiffrin has said she plans to appear in a sixth race on Saturday, a team event that was added to the Olympics four years ago.

Michelle Gisin defended her gold medal, making Switzerland the first country to win five Alpine golds at one Olympics.

CANADA REGAINS HOCKEY GOLD

With "Captain Clutch" Marie-Philip Poulin scoring twice, Canada regained its place atop the women's hockey world by beating the rival United States 3-2 in the gold-medal game. Poulin scored her third Olympic gold-medal clinching goal. She won golds in her first two Olympics, at Vancouver and Sochi, before Canada lost to the United States at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. □



The main parking lot at the Los Angeles Angels Tempe Diablo Stadium remains closed as pitchers and catchers are not starting spring training workouts as scheduled as the Major League Baseball lockout enters its 77th day and will prevent pitchers and catchers from taking the field for the first time since October in Tempe, Ariz., Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

Associated Press

MLB labor talks last 15 minutes as lockout continues

By RONALD BLUM

AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On what was supposed to be the second day of spring training, negotiations aimed at ending Major League Baseball's lockout resumed Thursday at the office of the players' association.

The meeting lasted about 15 minutes.

A three-man MLB delegation led by Deputy Commissioner Dan Halem ar-

rived shortly before 1 p.m. for just the sixth negotiating session on core economics since baseball's ninth work stoppage began Dec. 2. The union dropped its request to have all players with two years of major league service become eligible for salary arbitration and instead proposed expanding "super two" eligibility — the players with two to three years of major league service who are eligible — from 22% to 80%.

As part of the proposal, the union increased the proposed bonus pool for pre-arbitration players from \$100 million to \$115 million. Clubs are at \$15 million. The union also expanded proposed eligibility for the bonus pool from 30 players to 150.

Players made proposals in six non-economic areas that included the Joint Drug Program, international play, and health and safety.